23: Franck--270-271 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians-1-2
116, 101, 291, 301, 481 Ethnic subgroup

"I had known the Miao, or, as the French call them, the Méo, in southwestern China, though there my acquaintance had been mainly with the 'Flowery Miao' in their extravagantly colorful dress. These were 'Black Miao', a much more independent tribe, and with almost no color in their black or dark-blue garments, sometimes set off by a dull red or purplish wine-colored scarf about the waist. Both men and women, often riding on horses, were a wilder tawnier type than their flowery relatives, their sturdy independence as plainly to be seen as their bare feet; for none of them, of either sex, had ever tortured their feet with shoes. Their sunburned hair and eyes were more nearly brown than black, and both sexes wore the hair long. Most of the men had carelessly wound turbans of dark cloth, a few of them wore Chinese skullcaps and dressed their hair Chinese fashion, old Chinese fashion, more exactly, for the majority still had queues, often hanging unbraided loosely about their shoulders. Another custom among these sturdy mountaineers is the wearing about their necks of heavy silver rings of all shapes. These are evidently concerned with their tribal superstitions as well as being their idea of combining adornment with safe banking. All silver money that falls into their hands is turned into rings; men, women, even the children, all wear them, large and small, from mere twisted silver wire to veritable horse-collars, some with open ends, some fastened with silver padlocks. Sometimes there are as many as half a dozen on a single neck, even of men on their way to work in the jungle. The richest

of them clanked like perambulating pawnshops whenever they moved.

A critical observer might have wondered why they do not spend for shirting some of the silver dollars they turn into neck-rings. For the men wear a shirt or jacket that covers [271] everything except what a shirt is most expected to cover, leaving bare a foot or more of the waist, with the navel as its central point of departure. But to every race its own ideas. The girls are not prudish, yet not at all forward. For their jackets, open almost to the navel and giving frequent half-glimpses of the breasts, were plainly designed for comfort rather than coquetry, as were their plaid skirts reaching hardly to their bare knees. The women walk with a powerful yet not ungraceful swing of the hips and a saucy flirting of their short pleated skirts, of which they are perhaps quite unconscious. Some of the men wear the tatooed blue panties ending in ruffles just below the knees that are common in Laos and the Shan States, but this is evidently due to extratribal influence, just as are the flowered silk gowns a few of the well-to-do among them wear after the fashion of the Chinese."

389 the rockets are naturally in proportion to the size of the latter. For large rockets, they are made up of a kind of broad, triangular ladder, the top of which is leaned against a tree top.

524 527 Hot air balloons. In northern Laos, balloons are constructed out of paper which is either made locally or imported from China. They are cylindro-spherical in shape and a little gondola of rattan cane is suspended from them by a cotton thread. In the gondola there is an oil cup filled with lard and provided with two or three cotton wicks, and these are lit in order to keep the air in the balloons hot for a given length of time.

Since they are generally launched in the evening at the time of the great holiday of the twelfth month (October-November), the absence of wind makes it possible to follow their aerial course as long as the cotton wicks continue to give off light.

[469] [Illustration at top of page]

CHAPTER X

1. PRESENT ROUTES OF COMMUNICATION BY LAND

487 We have already dealt in Chapter II with the routes of communication by river, and so shall deal here only with land routes (1).

(1) See Appendix XXVII.

In Laos they are of three kinds:

1. The cart roads negotiable by ox-carts and wagons;

2. The mule tracks over which elephants, horses, mules and oxen can pass.

3. The paths or even mere trails which can be used only by travelers on foot.

[481] [470] As a consequence of the ingrained habit which both animals and people have of always walking in single file, the roads of Laos, like those of many other lands, are reduced to the width of a path which is marked on the ground either by the trampling animals and men, or by two deep ruts into which the wheels of carts sink. In the forest, depending on how wide and how high a path has been cleared through the undergrowth, a road may be practicable for elephants, men on horseback, oxen or only for travelers on foot.

177 gesture, and others say that to salute the Laotian way sometimes
576 seems degrading because those whom one greets do not always return the greeting in the same manner, considering it as an homage which is their due but which does not need to be reciprocated.

The Laotian is polite, one must abide by that. The Laotian is respectful of tradition, one must abide by that even more emphatica But let us not forget that from now on all Laotians must have the sense of progress and the desire to improve themselves. Politeness must be neither a unilateral token of respect nor a mark of the humiliation of the human being.

554 To salute in the French manner the subordinate nods his head
576 after having taken off his hat if he is wearing one. If someone extends his hand to him, he shakes it. The superior is the first to hold out his hand. The woman is the first to hold her hand out to a man. To be polite one should shake hands somewhat forcefully. In order to do so one should always use one's right hand and never imitate certain Laotian peasants who, under the pretense of being acquainted with French customs, extend their hand from afar to Europeans while stretching out their left arm.

In the street.--When one meets a high personage in the street it is no longer necessary, as it used to be, to sit down in order to greet him. After having taken off one's hat one nods one's head. If one is not wearing a hat one is free to greet him either by joining one's hands together or by nodding one's head politely. If one is on a bicycle or on a horse, there is no need at all to dismount. The mere gesture of nodding one's head suffices. If one has something to say to a friend whom one meets, one should stand on the side of the street or of the pavement to conduct one's conversation. When one is on a bicycle one should dismount and should not leave one leg over the frame of the bicycle while one is chatting. If one is dealing with a colleague or an intimate friend, one may hail him using expressions like: "Sabay!" (good day), or "Pai sai ma?" (where are you coming from?): that is good tradition, which must always be preserved.

481 Laotians have the habit of walking in Indian file. This habit
576 should be abandoned because it is no longer good form. It will be well to practice the European custom of walking abreast of one another except in cases when this is a hindrance or on a path. When there are two people walking together, /972/ the superior places

481 himself at the right hand side. When there are three, the superior
576 walks in the middle. The same applies to travel in a conveyance. But when the group is very numerous, it is not possible for all to walk abreast. In that case the walkers divide themselves into several groups.

576 Habits and deportment.--The different habits of a person often attract the attention of the others. Our bad habits are immediately remarked by those who surround us; thus we become the laughing-stock of the whole community. Persons who expose themselves to ridicule and to mockery are the fools who make a display of their learning; people who wear glasses without being either near-sighted or farsighted or even without having anything wrong with their eyes; those who lower their hat to the right when the sun strikes their left temple; those who speak and while doing so always keep their pipe or a cigarette in their mouths; those who, while they speak or are walking, constantly keep their hands in the pockets of their trousers; those women whose sin is raised above their knees; and those who make themselves up and dress like actresses.

The habits which I have just described belong to persons who do not take the trouble of observing the behavior of well-bred people in order to follow their example. Those who, instead of observing other, prefer to keep their own bizarre habits are nok vong or nok soun persons (eccentrics).

I cannot, here, enumerate all types of correct behavior. You may consider as good behavior that which does not arouse the attention of others in an unfavorable way. A polite person is recognized by the fact that he talks softly, that he observes the hierarchy and by the fact that he always says: "Khop chai!" (thank you) and "Kho thot!" (pardon me). The politest terms for saying thank you are "Khop khoun!" and "Khop phadet phakhoun!" Well-bred people use these phrases every time they receive something or when someone has rendered them a service. They never forget to say: "Pathan thot!" or "Kho aphaythot!" (1) every time they make a slip in

1. Other terms of politeness used to excuse oneself.

speaking, when they pass in front of, or near, a person, when they are forced to pass through a door ahead of others or when they have